

IRONDALE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MINNESOTA BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 27, 2024) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Juriad Hughes, Jr.** of **Irondale High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Minnesota Boys Track & Field Player of the Year**. Hughes, Jr. is the first Gatorade Minnesota Boys Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Irondale High School.

The award, which celebrates the nation’s top high school athletes for excellence on the field, in the classroom and in the community, distinguishes Hughes, Jr. as Minnesota’s best high school boys track & field player. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport, touting an all-star group of alumni that includes Alan Webb (2000-01, South Lakes High School, Va.), Kerron Clement (2002-03, Laporte High School, Texas) and Grant Fisher (2014-15 & 2013-14, Grand Blanc High School, Mich.).

The 6-foot-1, 170-pound senior jumper/sprinter won a national title in the long jump at Nike Outdoor Nationals to earn All-American honors this past season. Hughes followed up with a second-place finish in the event at USATF U20 Championships, soaring a state-record 25 feet, 4.5 inches and recording the nation’s top wind-legal distance among boys prep competitors this spring. He won three gold medals at the Class AAA state meet, winning his signature event as well as the 100- and 200-meter dash, helping the Knights to fifth place as a team. His clocking in the 200 was a personal-best 21.22 seconds, which ranked No. 82 nationally in 2024.

A member of the Youth Leaders For Change initiative, a non-profit organization that helps equip young people with life and leadership skills, Hughes has volunteered locally by packing food for Feed My Starving Children, which helps provide nutrition for the malnourished worldwide. He has also donated his time with the school’s football team during Stockyard Days, a 10-day celebration of the spirited history of the town of New Brighton. “Through a series of injuries and personal setbacks, Juriad has certainly been challenged over the years, but it’s helped mold him into the young man he’s become,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “Now a national champion, he has prevailed and can seek out even bigger challenges.”

Hughes has maintained a 3.26 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on scholarship at the University of Arkansas this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Hughes, Jr. joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Boys Track & Field Players of the Year Hayden Bills (2022-23, Rosemount High School), Ramy Ayoub (2021-22, Farmington High School), Marcus Hansen (2020-21, Waseca High School) and AJ Green (2019-20, Eastview High School), among the state’s list of former award winners.

As part of Gatorade’s commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$4.9 million in grants to winners across more than 1,900 organizations.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit playeroftheyear.gatorade.com or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.